

Railway Brotherhoods in the United States

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that could be taken either by employers or municipalities or the State to lessen the consumption of intoxicating liquor among the people. The replies were very varied in character: 1,103 employers suggest prohibition; 445 a high license; and 180 education. The replies received from liquor dealers to this query deserve separate notice. It is only natural that the abolition of prohibitory laws should often be recommended, and lower license and more liberal excise laws are generally favoured.

Many of the replies lay great stress on the evils which arise from the custom of "treating."

"From about thirty years' observation I am convinced that the bad habit of 'treating' is the cause of more drunkenness than any other one thing."

"Prohibition increases the desire for whisky, wine, and beer. The abolition of the 'treating' habit of our people would decrease consumption, increase sobriety, and solve the liquor problem."

"We believe that the brewers' methods to establish as many saloons as possible by favouring low license, &c., and the 'treating' habit, are the two worst enemies of moderation and true temperance."

The closing chapter of the Report contains a summary of the laws relating to the liquor traffic which prevail in the different States of the Union.

A valuable abstract of the Report will be found in the *Bulletin of the Labour Dept. of the U.S.A.* for July, 1898. CHRISTABEL OSBORN

## RAILWAY BROTHERHOODS IN THE UNITED STATES.

THE railway employees in the United States, as we learn from the *Bulletin of the Labour Department*, number more than 800,000, and not less than one-twentieth of the entire population of the country is supported by the wages and salaries paid by the railway companies. The organisations that have grown up among them, and the efforts they are putting forth for the improvement of their condition deserve attention.

In order to obtain relief and insurance, the railway employee has the choice of several organisations. Many companies encourage their employees to take out policies in life and accident insurance companies, and often pay a portion of the premium themselves. Relief and insurance associations are also organised by the companies themselves, membership of which is sometimes compulsory and sometimes voluntary. Finally, there are the relief organisations organised and managed entirely by the employees. In some of these the membership is confined to the employees of a single railroad; in others, the organisation is national and includes all the employees engaged in one branch of railway labour, without regard to place. These last are the most important. The oldest and largest is the International Brotherhood

of Locomotive Engineers, which was founded in 1863, whilst its present membership is about 32,000.

The Order of Railway Conductors numbers about 22,000 members. At one time in its career it was threatened with a serious split, on account of its prohibition of strikes, and a rival society with a "protective policy" was started; but in 1890, the Order adopted this policy also, and the two societies were merged into one.

Other important societies are the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, the Brotherhood of Railroad Trackmen, the Switchmen's Union of North America, the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, and the Order of Railroad Telegraphers. The objects of these Brotherhoods are partly social and educational, but their chief aim is the improvement of the industrial status of their members and the promotion of their economic interests as employees. They arrange wage schedules, and make arrangements about overtime, and each Brotherhood has its "grievance committees" to arrange differences between members and their employers. As a whole, however, the "strike" weapon has been used very cautiously by the Brotherhoods.

The second prominent feature in their organisation is the benefit department or insurance association, by means of which the members secure both life and disability insurance. Membership in this department is compulsory in the four largest Brotherhoods. The amounts for which members may insure differ largely with the different organisations, the policies being naturally largest in those Brotherhoods whose members are in receipt of higher wages. For instance, members of the Order of Railway Conductors may insure for \$1,000, and for multiples of that sum up to a maximum of \$5,000. The amount of the assessments levied is determined in various ways. The Order of Railway Conductors assesses all its insured members a fixed sum per \$1,000 of insurance carried, and the amount of the insurance which a member may carry is determined by the age at which he joins the order. In the case of the Locomotive Firemen and the Railroad Trainmen, the assessments, determined solely by the amount of the insurance certificates, are levied on the first of the month as often as may be required to meet outstanding claims, and not on fixed dates.

These central organisations only enable the members of the Brotherhoods to secure insurance payable in case of death or total disability. The definition of the latter varies considerably. Sick and accident benefits to members temporarily incapacitated must be arranged for by local organisations in connection with the branches. These have in many cases been formed, and in all cases local branches take that care of their sick members which is customary in fraternal organisations.

As to the future of these Brotherhoods, they are undoubtedly growing in membership and influence, and a plan of federation has been arranged between some of the most important, which will enable them to co-operate in carrying out common purposes. The power to strike

is placed in the hands of the federated boards ; each Brotherhood has one vote, and the vote in favour of a strike must be unanimous in order to carry. It is therefore probable that this federation of the Brotherhoods will tend rather in favour of conservatism than of radicalism.

CHRISTABEL OSBORN

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### MONETARY REFORM IN THE UNITED STATES.

It is, probably, a familiar commonplace to the English as well as the American student of economic affairs that the monetary system of the United States stands in considerable need of reform. Doubtless matters are not quite so bad as they are often painted. The complexity which always impresses the foreign observer, accustomed as he is to a more simple and homogeneous order of things, offends the observer's sense of symmetry much more than it impairs the efficiency of the system. In like manner, the insecurity of the gold standard is commonly much exaggerated. Capital is proverbially timid, and reformers must make out a strong case to justify their existence. Further, this insecurity is hardly so much a matter of the system as of the situation. So long as there is a powerful minority opposed to the continued maintenance of the gold standard, a minority that has more than once been very near being turned into a majority, the unquestioned security of that standard is not to be expected. Nevertheless, after the utmost allowance has been made for these and other considerations, it still remains true that reform is really needed.

In the first place, it must be admitted that the standard is not as secure as it *could* easily be, and, hence, not as secure as it *ought* to be ; for a thoroughly secure standard is an indispensable condition of abiding industrial prosperity. Again, the unsatisfactoriness of the bank note system, in one particular at least, is universally conceded. It has almost no elasticity. In ordinarily prosperous years the regular autumnal demand for money to move the crops causes a decided stringency in the loan market. In the case of a panic, matters are vastly worse. During the crisis of 1893, all parts of the country experienced a veritable monetary famine. It is probably safe to say that something like \$100,000,000 worth of non-legal money, or money substitutes, was put in circulation.<sup>1</sup> Naturally enough, this experience led to a very great demand for what is known as an emergency circulation. A large number of people who had never before heard anything about the Suspension of the Bank Act of 1844, or about the "elastic limit" of the German system, came to understand the working of this expedient and clamoured for the introduction of some similar

<sup>1</sup> I say non-legal rather than illegal, although by no means all of them could in an exact statement escape the latter designation. The need, however, was so evident and so imperative that the public was disposed to overlook the element of doubtful legality.